

1 John 1:1-4

A Bible Study by Faith Focus

Featured on the "Study Time" Podcast

Introduction

The book of 1 John is an epistle (or letter) written by what the early church fathers and many theologians believe is John the apostle. It is believed to have been written later in John's life probably when he resided in Ephesus. While John uses the word "I" a lot in this letter he also uses "we" frequently. The "we" being either those the recipients of the letter already had knowledge of who were with him at the time or in some cases "we" in reference to those who personally witnessed Jesus. The letter has no clear indication of whom it is written to, but it is certain that it was written to one or more congregations of Christians who need help with a particular problem. That problem being that their were some among them who had left and begun to teach falsely of Christ.

Theme

John's letter focus mostly on the core of Christianity. What it means to be a Christian and in a sense what a Christian "looks" or "acts" like. He does this with authority as he corrects the readers on things like the truth of who Christ was, including his divinity and humanity and what that means in regard to the true believer. Many questions that Christians might have are answered very well in this letter as well.

Highlights

There are many things we will learn in 1 John and many of those things come as answers to popular questions. Some of these answers are to questions like: What is a Christian supposed to be like? What should a Christian do when they sin? How do I know if I am a Christian? What does it mean to be obedient? And many more.

Uses

This book is, in general, good for anyone that is searching for answers about what they are doing in their Christian walk. Not only that, this book is very useful for anyone who feels they are being lead astray from the true gospel message.

Outline

We will be covering 1 John over a series of 9 studies that touch on the following topics.

1. Who Christ is
2. Walking in the light
3. Being Children of God
4. Belief
5. Love

Introduction

As we read these verses pay attention to the awkwardness of them. While John's message is very clear here, it seems as though he almost stumbles to get the words out so quickly and importantly that in doing so he repeats himself a few times. And while it does seem awkward and odd that he would repeat himself we have to keep in mind that he is gravely worried about those he is writing to and wants them to know very quickly and assuredly that what he is bearing witness to is not a figment of his imagination or a created story of his own, but a truth that is very important they understand before they read on.

Read Verses 1-4

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

Verse Focus (re-read verses 1-2)

In verse 1 why does John stress that they have heard, seen, and touched Jesus?

It is important to understand what things they had heard, seen and touched. What things would John be referring to that they had heard?

What things might they have seen?

How might they have touched him?

John here describes Jesus as the Word of Life. Why would he choose this name or description of Jesus?

In verse 2 John then says this life appeared or was made manifest. What does this mean?

John already basically said “we have seen this man”. But what else have they seen as well, besides being a man what else had they witnessed that Jesus was?

Moving Forward

John has already asserted his authority on the subject as a firsthand eyewitness. Now he goes on in verses 3 & 4 to explain why they are proclaiming this to the reader.

Verse Focus (re-read verses 3-4)

How would we describe the fellowship that John sought with the readers and why he sought it?

The “our” used in verse 4 is better described as “yours and ours”. With that being said, there are two separate kinds of joy experienced here. Firstly what joy would be complete for the reader who has fellowship with God?

What joy would be complete for John?

Think About It

This communion of believers with the Father and the Son, is begun and kept up by the influences of the Holy Spirit. The benefits Christ bestows, are not like the scanty possessions of the world, causing jealousies in others; but the joy and happiness of communion with God is all-sufficient, so that any number may partake of it; and all who are warranted to say, that truly their fellowship is with the Father, will desire to lead others to partake of the same blessedness. **-Matthew Henry**

Examination

John knew it was important for a Christian to tell a person the gospel message, but he know doubt knew the importance of explaining what the message meant. With this in mind, what approach should we take in telling people about the gospel?

Although it might not be evident when reading through the first two verses, John, whether intentionally or not, lays out a great pattern to how we should approach a non-believer. Right from the start of verse 2 we see that pattern when he says the following (have seen, testify, proclaim) which the IVP commentary states is easily understood as (experience, testimony, evangelism – which means telling them what trust in Jesus means for them). With that being said, what would be a good way to approach someone with the gospel message?

If we take note from John what would be the proper way to explain to a non-believer the reason for you telling them the gospel message (as this should be your true motive anyway)?

Discussion

John, through the first 4 verses describes Jesus, both human and divine. The world sees Jesus a different way. Can anyone think of some of the ways you have heard Jesus described? Why do you think he was described this way?

What are some specific joys that a Christian might experience with a fellow believer?

Sharing Topics

Who is Jesus in your own words?

What are some specific joys you have experienced in you life as a Christian?